



Continuing our reflection on the Creed, we come to the Third Person of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit.

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,  
who spoke through the prophets.*

By labeling the Holy Spirit as “Lord” the Creed acknowledges the Spirit as co-equal with the Father and the Son as does the label “the Giver of Life.” Just as “the Creator of heaven and earth” (the Father) and the Son (“through whom all things were made”), the Spirit gives life. In the Gospel of St. John Jesus promises his disciples, “I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he *abides with you and he will be in you.*”

So, just like with Jesus whom the Father sent to proclaim the Good News, the Father sends the Spirit to take up where Jesus left off. And just like Jesus who says in St. John’s Gospel, “I am the way, the truth and the life,” this new Advocate is the “Spirit of truth.” In the *Acts of the Apostles* St. Luke describes the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Baptized in the Spirit, the disciples began gathering the new People of God, the Church. So the Spirit proclaims the Good News, not himself, but through the disciples. *And he is still doing it through us, the disciples of today!*

The final section of the Creed concerns this new People of God, the Church.

*I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church,  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead  
and life everlasting. Amen.*

We profess belief in a Church characterized by 3 attributes: one, holy and apostolic.

Over the centuries since this Creed was put together, the Church has fought, fractured and split. The Eastern Church, which we know as Orthodox, developed a different point of view from the Western Church, the Roman Church. And they fought like cats and dogs.

Influenced by the well structured Roman Empire, the Western Church evolved with a hierarchy giving the leader, the Pope, absolute authority. The Roman Church liked to have things well defined, providing good order. It still does.

The Eastern Church, however, evolved as a more collegial structure relying on the wisdom of a Council of Bishops which held authority. In the east people didn’t like everything well defined. They preferred leaving doctrine and spirituality more fluid to let the Spirit be free. It’s kind of like the argument between a strong Federal government and States’ Rights. The argument

between East and West got pretty ugly ending in 1054 with each side excommunicating the other fracturing the one Church.

About 500 years later, Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses on a church door in Wittenberg, Germany, inaugurating the Protestant Reformation. Luther challenged the absolute power of the Pope and split the Roman Church into Lutheran, Presbyterian and Free thinkers. Today, there are about 30,000 different Christian denominations throughout the world.

Despite this break-up of the structure of the Church, striving to be “holy” didn’t change. While there may be various definitions of the word “holy,” people’s desire to find God and live as God wishes continues. This remains our oneness.

Claiming to be “apostolic” means we base ourselves on the teaching of the 12 Apostles of Jesus. The Scriptures let us know that the Apostles didn’t always see eye to eye. There were strong disagreements among the Apostles and later among the disciples. Some disciples wanted the first Christians to be Jews since Jesus was a Jewish rabbi. St. Paul rigorously fought this idea and won. Thirty years later, St. John’s Gospel and letters warn against those who have very different interpretations of what Jesus taught, turning the faith into a cult.

So what does this Creed amount to? Remember, the Creed is a human construct even if guided by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps, the Creed is the best we can agree upon as the People of God. Both the Orthodox and mainline Protestants profess this same Creed. Professing this Creed, we commit ourselves to strive to understand the God who is ultimately unknowable. It’s a mystery we live within, not a puzzle to be solved. By professing this Creed, we ask the Spirit to guide us.

*Fr. Denis*